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P O E M S.

- I. ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE.
- II. THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.



By *WILLIAM COWPER*,

OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.



L O N D O N :

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1798.

[Price SIXPENCE.]



ON THE RECEIPT OF  
MY MOTHER'S PICTURE  
OUT OF NORFOLK.

THE GIFT OF MY COUSIN ANN BODHAM.

OH that those lips had language! Life has pass'd  
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.  
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smiles I see,  
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;  
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,  
“Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!”  
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes  
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,  
The art that baffles time's tyrannic claim  
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.  
Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,  
Oh welcome guest, though unexpected, here!

Who bidd'ft me honour with an artlefs fong,  
Affectionate, a mother loft fo long.

I will obey, not willingly alone,  
But gladly, as the precept were her own ;  
And, while that face renews my filial grief,  
Fancy fhall weave a charm for my relief—  
Shall fteep me in Elyfian reverie,  
A momentary dream, that thou art fhe.

My mother ! when I learn'd that thou waft dead,  
Say, waft thou confcious of the tears I fhed ?  
Hover'd thy fpirit o'er thy forrowing fon,  
Wretch even then, life's journey juft begun ?  
Perhaps thou gav'ft me, though unfeen, a kifs ;  
Perhaps a tear, if fouls can weep in blifs—  
Ah that maternal fmile ! it answers—Yes.  
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,  
I faw the hearfe that bore thee flow away,  
And, turning from my nurs'ry window, drew  
A long, long figh, and wept a laft adieu !

But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone  
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.  
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,  
The parting sound shall pass my lips no more!  
Thy maidens griev'd themselves at my concern,  
Oft gave me promise of a quick return.  
What ardently I wish'd, I long believ'd,  
And, disappointed still, was still deceiv'd;  
By disappointment every day beguil'd,  
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.  
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,  
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,  
I learn'd at last submission to my lot,  
But, though I less deplor'd thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,  
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor;  
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,  
Drew me to school along the public way,  
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt  
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt,

'Tis now become a history little known,  
That once we call'd the past'ral house our own.  
Short liv'd possession ! but the record fair,  
That mem'ry keeps of all thy kindness there,  
Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd  
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.  
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,  
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid ;  
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,  
The biscuit, or confectionary plum ;  
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd,  
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd :  
All this, and, more endearing still than all,  
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,  
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks  
That humour interpos'd too often makes ;  
All this still legible in mem'ry's page,"  
And still to be so, to my latest age,  
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay  
Such honours to thee as my numbers may ;



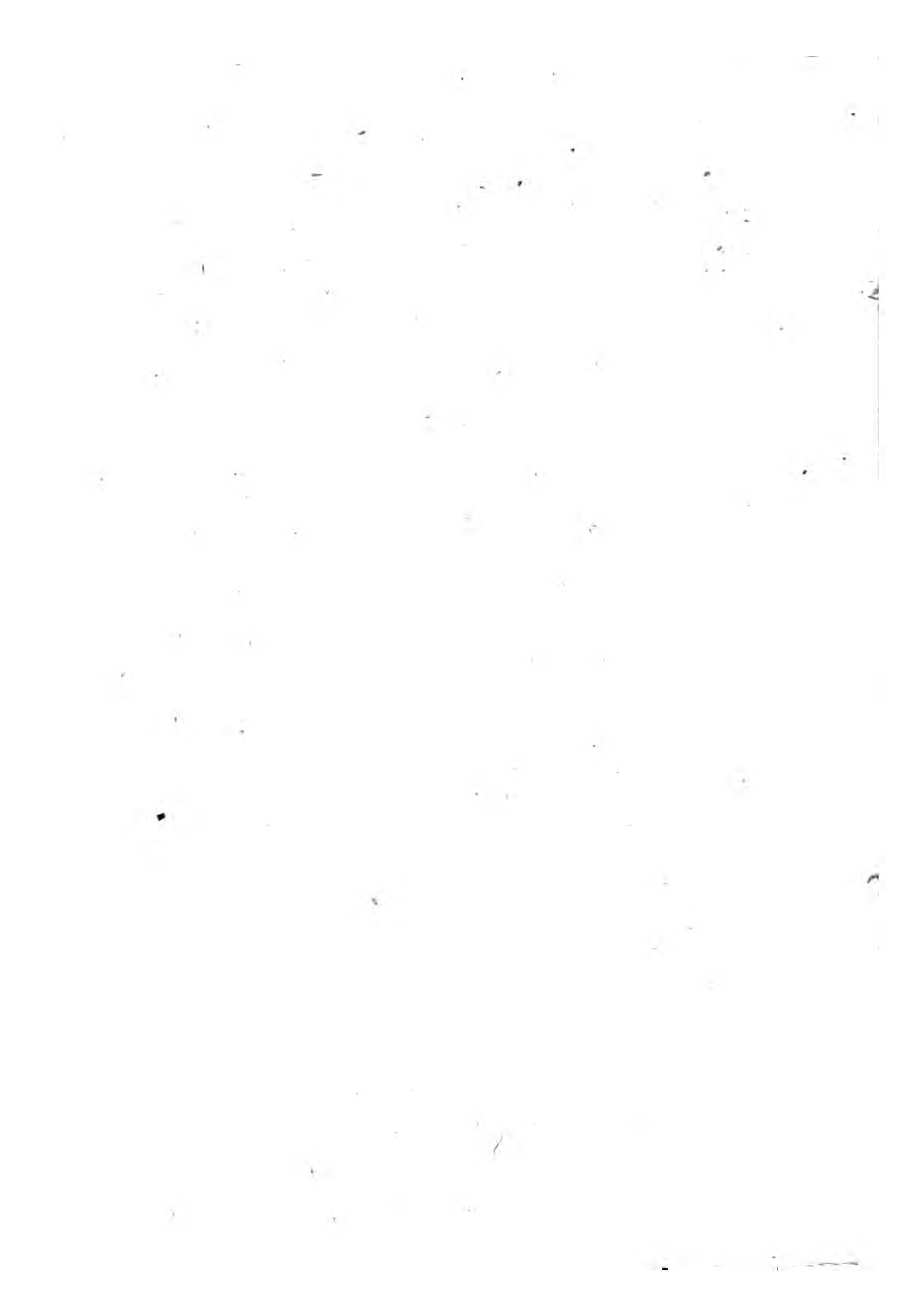
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,  
Not scorn'd in heaven, though little notic'd here.  
    Could time, his flight revers'd, restore the hours  
When, playing with thy vesture's tiffued flow'rs,  
The violet, the pink, and jassamine,  
I prick'd them into paper with a pin,  
(And thou wast happier than myself the while,  
Would'ft softly speak, and stroke my head and smile)  
Could those few pleasant hours again appear,  
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?  
I would not trust my heart—the dear delight  
Seems so to be desir'd, perhaps I might.—  
But no—what here we call our life is such,  
So little to be lov'd, and thou so much,  
That I should ill requite thee to constrain  
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

    Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast  
(The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd)  
Shoots into port at some well-haven'd isle,  
Where spices breathe and brighter seasons smile,

There sits quiescent on the floods that show  
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,  
While airs impregnated with incense play  
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;  
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reach'd the shore  
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar\*,"  
And thy loved consort on the dang'rous tide  
Of life, long since, has anchor'd at thy side.  
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,  
Always from port withheld, always distress'd—  
Me howling winds drive devious, tempest toss'd,  
Sails ript, seams op'ning wide, and compass lost,  
And day by day some current's thwarting force  
Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous course:  
But oh the thought, that thou art safe, and he!  
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.  
My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthron'd, and rulers of the earth;

\* Garth.

But higher far my proud pretensions rise—  
The son of parents pass'd into the skies.  
And now, farewell—time, unrevok'd, has run  
His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done.  
By contemplation's help, not fought in vain,  
I seem t' have liv'd my childhood o'er again;  
To have renew'd the joys that once were mine,  
Without the sin of violating thine;  
And, while the wings of fancy still are free,  
And I can view this mimic shew of thee,  
Time has but half succeeded in his theft—  
Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.



THE  
DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.

NO FABLE.

THE noon was shady, and soft airs  
Swept Ouse's silent tide,  
When, scap'd from literary cares,  
I wander'd on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,  
And high in pedigree,  
(Two nymphs \*, adorn'd with ev'ry grace,  
That spaniel found for me)

\* Sir Robert Gunning's daughters.

Now wanton'd lost in flags and reeds,  
Now starting into fight  
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads  
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse display'd  
His lilies newly blown ;  
Their beauties I intent survey'd,  
And one I wish'd my own.

With cane extended far I fought  
To steer it close to land ;  
But still the prize, tho' nearly caught,  
Escaped my eager hand.

*Beau* mark'd my unsuccessful pains  
With fixt confid'rate face,  
And puzzling fat his puppy brains  
To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong,  
Dispersing all his dream,  
I thence withdrew, and follow'd long  
The windings of the stream.

My ramble finish'd, I return'd.  
*Beau* trotting far before  
The floating wreath again discern'd,  
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropp'd  
Impatient swim to meet  
My quick approach, and soon he dropp'd  
The treasure at my feet.

Charm'd with the sight, the world, I cried,  
Shall hear of this thy deed,  
My dog shall mortify the pride  
Of man's superior breed ;

But, chief, myself I will enjoin,  
Awake at duty's call,  
To show a love as prompt as thine  
To Him who gives me all.

THE END.





